

Company of 1415
Dress Standards

INTRODUCTION

GENERAL

The accoutrements of modern life – car keys, mobile phones, chequebooks and cards, fags and lighters – need to be carried in a suitably medieval bag, pouch, basket or box.

Likewise flasks, Tupperware, coolboxes, crisps and drinks cans need to be suitably disguised and concealed.

SPECTACLES

Either medieval style or contact lenses.

Modern frames are not acceptable -worst of all when fitted with tinted or photochromatic lenses (which make them visible from the next county!)

Contact Lenses –disposable contact lenses in preference to the permanent sort on grounds of manageability and damage limitation -as well as hygiene -under often far from ideal campsite conditions.

There are two main types of frame:

1. A folding scissor type that is probably best held up in front of your eyes with one hand for a specific task. They can be something of a pain to keep on your nose for any length of time without leaning radically backward!

These glasses do look very fetching pinned or tied to your hat or chest.

A more familiar flat one piece set in any of the variety of materials described below. To be really accurate again they need to be balanced on your nose but for practicality they can be tied either round your ears with loops or behind your head with cord or thong. (Your hat or head tie will cover this anyway).

JEWELLERY

Modern jewellery items, especially watches, are a glaring intrusion very easily picked up on by the public.

However, perhaps the most obtrusive modernisms are contemporary nasal and other facial piercings – these also present a potential danger to the wearer in a combat situation anyway and need to be removed for re-enactment.

Rings may also be dangerous when fighting so should be taken off as well. Modern brilliant cut and fashion rings need to be avoided but those that really can't come off could simply be turned with the setting to the inside of the hand for re-enactment. However, many wedding and signet rings appear little different from ours so don't present such a problem.

Earrings peeking or dangling beneath women's correct medieval style head wraps and hats likewise intrude – in any case studs are painful as they get pressed into you by your headwear! However, there are several good 15th century illustrations of even Caucasian men wearing single ring style earrings, sometimes with a pendant drop, in either ear.

Tattoos need to be covered if possible – a rough strip of cloth tied as a bandage looks pretty effective.

MAKEUP

Makeup should be kept to an absolute minimum, most especially for women of middling and lower status.

In portraits of the period cheeks and lips seem to be reddened a little to accentuate but not over exaggerated. Eyes don't really seem to be obviously highlighted and there is no use of visible colour around them.

Nail varnish is a real intrusion, especially in currently fashionable dark colours.

As well as your fingers remember your toenails if there is any possibility of taking your shoes off in public!

Strong modern perfumes are also incongruous – most especially if you are fairly humbly attired.

HAIR

Both men and women covered their heads beyond the confines of their own private room, often there, too – Even naked women of extremely ill repute in bath-houses or in bed are often depicted wearing modest headwraps, so sadly it doesn't work just to consider oneself a bit slutty.

To knock off or remove a woman's head covering meant her whole being was rubbished – at the very least it was an accusation of adultery but often also coupled with a further charge such as heresy, poisoning or even murder.

As well as considering the convention of the time head coverings are vital for us as medieval re-enactors when so many of us -men, women and children -sport entirely inappropriate modern hairstyles.

Women's hair was cut only when cropped due to life threatening fever or as an extreme punishment. It was therefore worn long without a fringe. While no one is suggesting women pluck or shave their foreheads (though we wouldn't actually stop you...) covering the hair at the front is the major issue. Some later 15th century fashions in particular do show plaits or even loose hair at the back appearing from under either quite simple bands or smart headdresses. Even on positively mature women...

Men's hairstyles appear more diverse. A very short 'suede' crop (called a 'knot heed') was popular particularly amongst peasants and workers but also soldiers of all ranks -probably because it helped limit parasites such as lice and fleas! The 'pudding bowl' cut is getting old fashioned by the end of our period. However, a style brushed forward from the crown to a fringe is still 'in'. 'Pageboy' bobs abound and men's hair is also getting long and a bit ringletty.

CONVENTIONS, MODESTY, ETC.

Men are not usually shown bare chested even when working but they are shown bare armed wearing hose and a pourpoint (medieval waistcoat) without a shirt.

They tend rather to go bare legged and barefoot when hot either taking off or rolling down their (split) hose and wearing a tunic with braies (medieval underpants) or possibly just a shirt and braies to work.

However, do avoid wearing a belt over your shirt as this does look distinctly Hollywood!

Women are never shown bare armed but do appear in short sleeved or sleeveless kirtles (dresses) with the sleeves of the shift underneath rolled up quite high when working.

To appear beyond one's own room in a shift alone was a sign of dishonour or indictment for some dreadful crime and was therefore not done! Peasantry women and girls do appear bare legged and barefoot while working and with their kirtles hitched quite high (sometimes almost to the knee) Smarter women would wear knee length footed hose that were gartered below the knee.

ARMOUR

While head and hand protection need to be worn other armour is not mandatory, though it is encouraged for combat.

Where armour is worn or carried it should conform to the following:

Plate armour and helmets should be made of steel – positively no plastic or fibreglass. Chain mail should be made of metal links – absolutely no knitted mail. Both should be fit for purpose.

Be aware that much of the armour for sale at the re-enactment markets etc, goes beyond our period at both ends.

Yes, there would have been plenty of old/looted stuff (especially amongst the canon fodder) and not everyone would necessarily have been at the cutting edge of technology/ fashion. However, really antiquated armour is not visibly apparent in illustrations.

CROSS DRESSING

Ladies may dress as men (but should avoid girlie intrusions!)

Men wishing to dress as ladies should also ensure they only do so convincingly.

COLOURS

Steer clear of "modern" vibrant colours of a synthetic type. Generally you're safer with natural tones: dull blues, greys, browns/rusts, mustards and greens, dull reds and pinks, etc., most especially at the lower end of the social scale. In addition, their natural dyes probably faded more quickly than our modern chemical sort.

However, most colours were available from yellows through to black with posher folk able to afford the deeper brighter shades.

DON'T

Don't use obviously man made materials -they just don't hang or move correctly.

Don't use bust darts -medieval fit is made by shaping and curving seam lines and inserting panels (and lacing tightly)

Don't get seduced by Hollywood misconceptions or copy someone else assuming they have it right (or even that their personal style is generally appropriate)

Don't use machine stitching were it will be visible, hand finish instead.

Don't be overwhelmed by it all, any new pastime needs an outlay on gear and all this is still less costly than many hobbies. The text points out what is necessary as well as what is nice.

DO

Do go back to original illustrations rather than opt for total invention.

FABRICS

Linen & Calico

While calico is a generally acceptable substitute for linen in underwear and linings linen is the more accurate choice and has become widely available at re-enactment markets and events. (Ordinary cotton fabric is not really suitable at all)

It is vital to pre-shrink those fabrics you will later need to wash. Both linen and calico have a substantial shrinkage factor and you will find your lovely new garment no longer fits after the first laundering unless you preshrink.

Both linen and calico (even coloured) can be boil washed without harm on the 95 degree setting of a washing machine to preshrink before you cut out and make up your garment/lining.

Linen or calico that you intend to dye needs to be boil washed first anyway to remove any dressing – instructions are usually given on the packaging of the dye.

As shrinkage is considerable you should always bear this in mind when buying and ensure you get a bit extra than the project requires. (A very rough guide would be about 10% on an open weave of linen)

Luxury cloths

Velvets and silks need to be treated extremely carefully – these were not generally available to ordinary folk. In any case the medieval versions of these fabrics were quite different from ours:

Velvet -Longer piled and more open than ours. For the rich made entirely of silk, for the merely prosperous possibly silk pile on a linen ground.

Silk -In both light and heavy weights often twill woven for density. Much unpatterned heavy silk seems to have looked like a sheened linen.

Available for aristocrats and exotic foreigners in hugely expensive jacquard woven patterns or fine gauze veiling.

Cotton -It may seem surprising but cotton also falls into the luxury category in our period, at least on this side of the channel. It's really not until the colonial period that ordinary people could readily afford cotton fabrics in any quantity.

Even for officers, plush merchants and our social betters these luxury cloths would probably be confined to hats, sleeves, small panels etc. The most the rest of us could hope for is probably a purse or bag made from a cast off remnant.

MEN'S CLOTHING

For men the minimum kit is typically shoes, hat, shirt and hose followed fairly swiftly by a doublet or tunic (in order to keep reasonably warm)

BRAIES

Requirement:

In linen (or calico) usually in the natural/beige range of colour (or possibly bleached white) and with a drawstring waist.

Guidance:

Medieval boxer short type underpants vital under split hose (where they are cut appropriately longer in the leg). You may wish to incorporate a tie in the leg seam of longer braies to secure them around the leg and prevent 'riding up with wear'.

Desirable even under joined hose -in case these tear! -and in any case more comfortable under wool.

There was also a bikini style that seems to have tied at the sides.



SHIRT

Requirement:

In linen (or calico) in medieval style. Usually in natural/beige colour range or possibly bleached white.

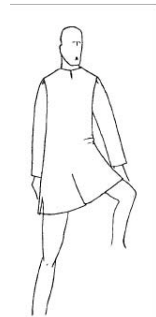
Guidance:

These garments are of an extremely simple untailed cut, full in the body and sleeve, possibly gathered at neck and wrist

Most shirts have a plain bound neck ; smarter ones may have a small 'stand' a bit like that on a modern collarless shirt. In order to get it over your head– without having a very baggy neckline – a front opening is required. Although this can be fastened either with a suitable cord tie or appropriate button the latter may dig into you under armour. Buttons at the wrist of the shirt may also be uncomfortable – especially under an archers' bracer. What we would now describe as a 'raglan' style armhole gives greater freedom of movement without tearing but don't cut too full or it may feel bulky under a close fitting doublet, etc. However, a simple T shaped shirt may need the addition of a square/diamond shaped gusset under the arm to make it more comfortable and durable.

If you wear split hose you will require a longer shirt -say 3" above the knee -as it is normal for the shirt to hang out front and rear (thus covering one's embarrassment).

For joined hose normal 20th century shirt length is about right -any more has nowhere to go and would look and feel bulgy.



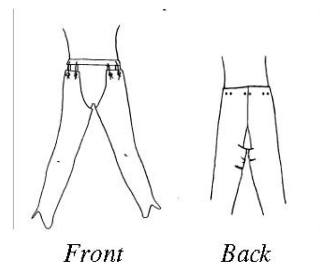
HOSE

Requirement:

Tight fitting to the leg, made from either wool or linen. There is ABSOLUTELY NO PLACE for stretch leggings, tights, sweatshirting, joggers or other modern substitutes.

Guidance:

For preference choose a good quality velour type wool, closely woven but with plenty of stretch on the cross. (You can test/ compare cloth on the roll by pulling gently with both hands along the diagonal)



Whatever your fabric it MUST be cut on the cross or bias (this means at 45 degrees to the woven selvedge edge) in order to give you the necessary stretch for movement. That said there are two distinct types:

Split -two separate legs held up by points (laces) tied over a belt at the waist or joined to the pourpoint/ doublet – or even a jack -by points or buttons.

These hose are generally appropriate to the earlier part of our period and are often worn with a longer tunic rather than a very short doublet. However, they do also appear later worn by labourers/ soldiers for hard work or where great agility is needed so you could also wear them attached to a doublet, etc.

Joined -a pair of legs joined at the fork usually by a gusset and with a codpiece flap at the front. The codpiece should be well fitted into the crotch but not padded.

Cutting the cloth on the Front diagonal is even more important for joined hose. You can double stitch over your backseams (obviously, only once you are happy with the fit) to make them more durable. Either machine stitch or do a medium size backstitch by hand.

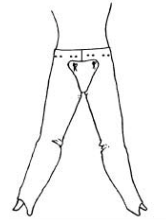
Either type of hose may be lined if you wish but this may affect their stretchiness. You are probably better off wearing a pair of longish braies underneath. This will have the same effect as part lining but without either the hassle or loss of freedom of movement.

We would in any case advise wearing of braies under hose for anyone both for reasons of modesty should the hose rip or tear and for comfort. Wool and heavy linen do not wick perspiration away from your skin in hot weather while the lighter linen or calico braies underneath will. This should avoid problems with heat rash and general discomfort that can deter people from wearing proper hose.

If you really can't bear wool next to your skin at all you could put a pair of lightweight longjohns or leggings on underneath your hose. You should, however, be careful nothing untoward shows around your ankles if you have shoes rather than boots.

You need to match the eyelet holes in the top of your hose to those along the lower edge of your pourpoint or doublet to ensure a good and comfortable fit. (In the 'Fasteners' section at the end of this guide there is a 'formula' given for spacing of eyelets)

Never cut your hose to length until you have tried them on properly laced to whatever is going to keep them up. If you do this and then still err on the side of length a plain edge should be fine. Hose can also be footed or self-stirruped, though.



Back

POURPOINT (and Petticote)

Requirement:

In medieval style made of wool or linen.

Guidance:

A sleeveless plain necked sort of waistcoat often with a peplum or skirt section (shorter than that on the doublet) The skirt has



eyelet holes for the attachment of hose points. These eyelets should be at the top of the skirt just below the waist if your hose come quite high but could be lower down if your hose are lower/shallower.

The front closure, which often overlaps, can also be by points or by hidden hooks (buttons may be uncomfortably lumpy once you put a doublet or cote on as well). The pourpoint should be firmly lined in linen (or calico) A useful garment for hot weather allowing the doublet to be discarded.

Petticotes: There are various definitions of the difference between a pourpoint and a Petticote, here are some:

While the front of a pourpoint may or may not overlap a Petticote does not. The front edges may in fact not even meet at all. Instead a narrow strip of shirt is left showing even with the front points tied tightly.

A Petticote may finish at the waist having no peplum/skirt at all. Eyelets are then worked close to the lower edge.

Pourpoints: vary in closeness of fit, petticotes tend to be tight, even corset like. Possibly pourpoints are more practical and workmanlike, petticotes something of a fashion statement.

All that said it might be very hard to accurately define a particular garment as positively one or the other!

The pourpoint or Petticote could be worn extremely tight, almost like a corset, to accentuate the male figure.....

TUNIC

Requirement:

In medieval style made of wool or heavy linen.

Guidance:

Often worn by poorer men such as labourers in the fields. Tunics are also worn by artisans and craftsmen who require the greater freedom of movement a tunic provides (especially when worn with split hose) If you aren't sure about revealing your bottom or are just not keen on the idea of a short doublet this is an option to consider.

The tunic can be plain or parti-coloured. It should be lined with linen (or calico) dyed to contrast or just left natural.

It pulls over the head but may have a short front opening for buttoning or lacing, too

Length is about mid thigh to just above the knee with an optional vent at the hem at each side. Possibly worn loose to work, a belt (for all your paraphernalia when moving around) will hitch the length up a bit.

In order to roll or pin up for work, the plain fitted sleeve may be left open for a few inches at the cuff for buttoning or lacing. (Buttons are painful under an archer's bracer or armour, though)

Tunics were probably often worn with split hose even late in our period but you could equally have a pourpoint and joined hose underneath for when the day gets warmer.



DOUBLET

Requirement:

In medieval style made of wool.

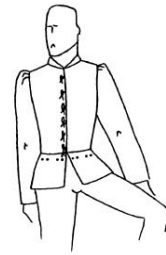
Guidance:

A short, front opening, fitted jacket type garment waisted and with a short peplum/base (skirt) The peplum often has eyelet holes (for attaching the hose points) sited at a level suitable for the hose.

The skirt of the doublet is never very long, say 9"/23cm, and so doesn't really look right if lengthened. If you do want something longer to cover your bum then go for a tunic or longer tunic cote.

The doublet should be lined with plain or dyed linen (or calico) a contrast colour looks smart. The outer of the doublet could be all one colour or parti-coloured in two – in a variety of configurations! Then as now a way of making do with not quite enough cloth of either colour for the complete garment.

The front closure may be by points (laces) hidden hooks or medieval style buttons. Buttons were sometimes placed in sets – pairs, trios, etc. Sleeves can be plain or made fuller at the head by gathering or cartridge pleating. There is also a puff-sleeved style with a full upper but fitted lower sleeve. A vent can be left at the wrist for either lacing or buttons – however, buttons can be uncomfortable, especially under an archer's bracer.



JACKETS & COTES

Requirement:

In medieval style made of wool.

Guidance:

Cut wider, fuller and longer than the doublet, variously with or without a waist seam, and worn over it either belted or loose. While more modest models would be cut barely more generously than a tunic smarter types could have loose or stitched pleats.

As usual the jacket/cote should be lined; you could use a contrasting colour if you wanted to be smart.

Sleeves could, as with the tunic, be unbuttoned or unlaced at a wrist vent to roll up for work. They may even be cut short at around the elbow but in any case need to be cut fuller to allow for the sleeve of a garment worn beneath.

The front closure could be by points, hidden hooks or buttons; quite often the latter. On smart jackets and cotes buttons can be placed in sets.

Jerkins (sleeveless) and jackets might also be made of material suitable to the wearer's occupation e.g. leather, sheepskin, heavy wool felt or even linen waxed to be waterproof. -Beware of cutting down old sheepskin and



leather jackets as machine stitching and other modern detailing does not go away.....

GOWN

Requirement:

In medieval style made of wool.

Guidance:

Gowns need to be lined as before with linen (or calico) They are really a bit posh for most of us so perhaps ought to be to knee or mid calf rather than full length. Generally full and belted into pleats and with full sleeves.

The plainest sort pulls over the head with a short centre front opening. Otherwise the gown may undo all down the front closed with concealed fasteners.

The neck closure could be by a single tie, button or clasp at the throat.



HUKE (GARNACHE)

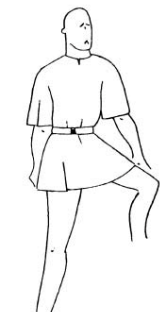
Requirement:

In medieval style made of wool.

Guidance:

A tabard like garment that pulls over the head and may be caught by stitching/ ties/fastening under the (loose) armhole. The lining, as usual in plain or dyed linen (or calico) is especially important as it will show.

The huke can be self or parti-coloured – this would thus be an ideal garment to make in livery colours! -and can be worn belted or loose. A useful warm garment that leaves the arms free for working.



CLOAK

Requirement:

Made of wool and lined with linen (or heavy calico)

Guidance:

Cloaks should be lined with good fabric as this will show.

They may have plain or liripipe hoods, closure may be by points or buttons or a clasp.

A word of warning:

Cloaks are desperately impractical in that they confine your arms; all you can do in them is walk or sit!

While they may seem appropriate, early in our period huke were more widespread, later the gown was more fashionable.

Cloaks were really still worn just in really foul weather and for travelling.

FOOTWEAR

Requirement:

Flat soled pointed or semi pointed shoes or boots made of leather in the medieval style.



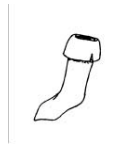
Pattens worn either with footed hose (especially when posh) or sometimes barefoot.

Guidance:

Good quality machine stitched shoes and boots – currently available for around £50:00 are acceptable (especially as these are difficult to distinguish from stitched welt footwear when worn in)



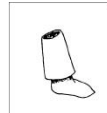
Pattens (a medieval style wooden over sole with leather straps) are also acceptable. Traditionally used woods such as willow, alder and poplar are recommended. These really do wear best particularly on modern hard surfaces (which can also be slippery – be careful!) While beech and oak were also used they are much heavier and this makes your ankles ache.



A hinge, usually made of thick leather, placed under the ball of the foot makes pattens more comfortable and practical.

Footwear is really important.

Modern boots and shoes DO show and look totally out of place. However much effort you may have made elsewhere it will be cancelled out by naff modern shoes or poor adaptations – in fact the more you have done elsewhere the worse the clash.



Probably this should be almost your first acquisition.

HEADGEAR

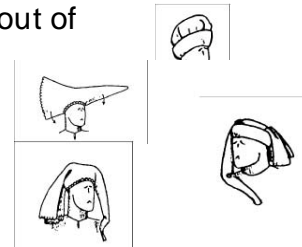
Requirement:

In medieval style and in a fabric appropriate to the type e.g. linen (or calico) for a coif, wool felt or fabric for hats, lined wool for hoods, etc. Some sort of headgear must be worn not only to cover our out of place modern coiffure but also to follow the custom of the time we depict.



Guidance:

This is the area where you can really express your individuality –the variety of medieval headgear is considerable and a good hat does round off your outfit.



BELTS,BAGS,ETC

Requirement:

In medieval style and usually made of leather, belts could also be of tablet woven braid.

Purses and pouches could also be of a suitable cloth.

For larger campaign type bags use linen, canvas (or calico)

Guidance:

Belts were worn in varying widths depending on the weight of the article they supported, they were often worn long being looped over at the front and left to dangle.



Pouches and bags come in a myriad of styles -from frame purses to bollock pouches -another area to express personal choice. Medieval



man can seem festooned with innumerable items hanging about the waist; remember, they had no pockets.

WOMEN'S CLOTHING

- Again, there are minimum requirements these being shoes, shift, kirtle (dress) and headtie (cloth).
- The rest is to whet your appetite.

HOSE

Requirement:

Made of fine linen or wool, footed and gartered with cord above the knee and/or a buckled strap garter just below.

Guidance:

As with men's hose these must be cut on the cross for stretch. However, it is quite difficult to find suitable fabric: Most linen isn't stretchy enough and much wool is too thick to allow you to still get your shoes on! Women's footed knee hose do work well with slip on pattens rather than shoes if you are being smartish, though.

Most of our women go bare legged in summer, which is fine. If you do wear woolly tights or hiking socks on a cold morning do remember your kirtle only conceals them as long as you don't hitch it up!

SHIFT

Requirement:

In linen (or calico) in medieval style in natural/cream range of shades or possibly bleached white.

Guidance:

A woman's shift is very similar to a man's shirt being a loose untailed garment; the only real difference is in length. The shift comes anywhere between mid-calf and ankle depending on the length of your kirtle (if you have your shift too long it gets really filthy)

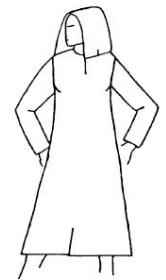
The shift needs to be reasonably well fitted into the armpit to enable you to wear your kirtle over the top comfortably.

Shifts beneath ordinary women's kirtles are never sleeveless; women did not appear bare armed when minus their kirtle sleeves.

Sleeves are always long although they can be rolled up to work. If you want to have the feel of short sleeves but the look of rolled up shift sleeves you could make them just long (and wide) enough to fold up a couple of times and create an illusion. As we do so

many of our events in the heat of the summer this is a useful compromise.

The neckline of most shifts is plain bound and ungathered and is fairly high often showing above the kirtle neckline.



KIRTLE (DRESS)

Requirement:

A full length dress worn over the shift.

NOT a separate skirt and bodice/jacket

NOT open to the ground at the front (this is later, a 16th century style)

In medieval style made of wool or linen

Guidance:

The medieval shape is lean, long and smooth, rather a shame for those of us who are short and fat. Shaping is achieved by fitted curved seams and flared panels – not modern darts.

For ordinary women the kirtle is a complete dress (for very posh women only it can just be an underskirt worn with and showing under a tight fitting full length gown).

The kirtle can be waisted or cut in full-length panels. Fullness is achieved by flared panels – 4,6,7,8 even 12 or more.

A kirtle can be front, back or side opening (edge to edge with no overlap) and can be fastened by lacing or hooks, more rarely by buttons. Kirtles for pregnant women are managed by progressively relaxing/letting out lacing at both sides – a possible adaptation to an existing garment if you don't want to make a new one specially. Lacing should be single, straight or slanting (occasionally herringboned) but not crossed.

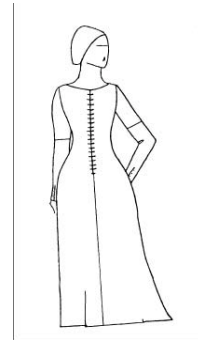
Length depends on status, too: if you're middle class or better the hem reaches the ground, if you're common only to the ankles or even slightly above.

Sleeves are invariably fitted but full length sleeves were often buttoned or laced to the elbow so they can be pinned or rolled up for work. Alternatively, they can be short with a lower section that unlaces or unbuttons from a short fixed upper sleeve to remove completely. Sometimes the entire sleeve may be removable if it is tied to the shoulder by points rather than being sewn in to the armhole.

Sleeves can also be sewn in at the shoulder but left free under the arm for greater mobility (and coolness) On many sleeves the seam line often goes down the back of the arm rather than underneath it (rather like on a modern jacket or blazer) as this, too, gives greater freedom of movement. Perhaps some of the extremely tight women's sleeves were also cut on the bias/ diagonal to give some stretch.

Even when kirtle sleeves are removed women do not appear bare armed because of the sleeves of the shift.

Necklines are lowish and quite wide showing the shift beneath.



GOWN

Requirement:

Made of wool in medieval style trimmed with contrast linen and lined with contrast coloured linen.

Guidance:



The ordinary woman's gown is an outer garment designed for smartness and/or warmth to be put on over the kirtle once work was completed or to go outdoors. A gown is also much more practical than a cloak as your arms are free. For poorer women their gown was probably really just a warmer or newer kirtle worn over the top of a thinner or older one. Even working people, though, were fond of colour worn in interesting layers and contrasts.

Pregnant women sometimes wear a loose unbelted gown that falls from small gathers onto a narrow neckband.

For middle class women and above the fashionable gown was a real sign of status – In particular tight waisting and sleeves, long cuffs and especially trains show the wearer to be quite incapable of physical labour.

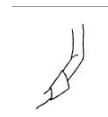
The gown shape is a full A-line cut rather more loosely than the kirtle and with slightly deeper armhole. It should be lined throughout with a suitable complement/contrast, as the lining will show when the skirt is hitched up. The pleated shape is achieved by belting tightly with a wide leather or fabric belt the lower edge of which sits on the natural waist to give the characteristic high waisted look.



Sleeves can be straight, that is fuller than those of the kirtle beneath, and a bit shorter to show these or tapered with a decorative turnback cuff.

The smart gown neckline is most usually a deep V coming almost to the top of the waistband; it could have a contrasting shaped revere/collar.

You can see that there is considerable scope for pushing up your gown by co-ordinating collar, cuffs, belt and lining.



While some modern upholstery fabrics and brocades will work, however, do be careful – what is fun for banquet/party wear may still be inappropriate at public events.

CLOAK

Requirement:

Made of wool and fully lined with linen (or calico)

Guidance:

As stated before cloaks are pretty impractical and restrict movement, they are becoming less popular toward the end of our period but still being worn for travelling or really foul weather.

Working women are more likely to borrow a huke or warm man's jacket (see Men's Clothing).

FOOTWEAR

Requirement:

Flat soled pointed or semi-pointed shoes or boots made of leather in the medieval style.

Pattens as described for men in their footwear section.

Guidance.

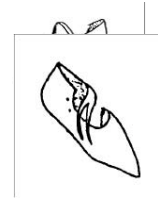


Although it seems easier to hide your feet under a skirt than if you were a chap this strategy fails utterly and completely as soon as you take a step!

As before, naff shoes will destroy the effect of the rest of your kit so footwear really is a priority over most other garments. As before, naff shoes will destroy the effect of the rest of your kit so footwear really is a priority over most other garments.

Women's shoes were very similar to men's especially at the lower end of the social spectrum. A bit higher up and shoes with a bar across the instep seem particularly popular for women (though equally worn by smart men)

Women are rarely shown wearing boots – though these would seem appropriate to women travelling and on military campaign.



HEADWEAR

Requirement:

Headcovering is a must for women. Only dishonoured women indicted or convicted of a crime go bare headed. Girls of marriageable age (say 12 to 18) wear their hair uncovered but even they generally wear some sort of frontlet/headband, bec or a small caul/tightly fitting coif.

Headties (cloths) may be of varying weights of linen (or calico) as are tied hats, which are self-lined.

Hoods can be linen (or calico) or wool lined with these.

Guidance:

Headgear is equally important as shoes, not just for historical correctness but also to cover glaring modern hairstyles.

It is just not possible to decide to be a trollop and go bare headed. If anything the rules for headwear worn by prostitutes were even more rigorous with instantly identifying striped or peaked hoods required. Even beggars on the road wear a basic head cloth. The simplest headgear is a cloth tied in a suitably medieval way, a plain folded square tied behind the head is better than nothing.

There are too many variations to go into here but you could always just look for one you like and ask its occupant for the shape required and the formula.

Very young/ virginal women and girls can get away with a simple frontlet band that actually leaves most of the head uncovered. Many styles – ‘rabbit’ hats, tied and open hoods, hennins and pillbox hoods – show a considerable amount of hair at the back by later in the 15th century. This could either be plaited or loose and doesn't seem to be dependent on age.

Tied hats and hoods of a fabric weight suitable to the season are more flattering (but remember to cover your modern hairstyle with a cloth if you choose an open hood).

Most of the slightly more elaborate and raised styles need to be firmly pinned down to a foundation band (or to lots of suitably dressed hair if you have it!)



BELTS, BAGS, ETC

Requirement:

Belts, purses and pouches should be made of leather or suitable fabric and of medieval style -ABSOLUT ELY no modern handbags!

Larger bags can be of canvas, linen (or calico) Even picnic boxes can be properly concealed in a well fitting bag.

An emergency sack can be sorted quickly by just tying the diagonally opposite corners of a piece of cloth over the top of the stuff to be concealed – like a “spotty hanky on a stick” bundle!

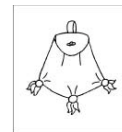
Baskets are particularly useful for transporting a multitude of goods. It's best to choose a traditional style in reasonably heavy hazel or willow as most lightweight cane looks too modern. – A simple cloth tucked over the top of a basket will conceal any amount of otherwise intrusive modern stuff.

Guidance:

Belts (which could also be tablet or braid woven) for women are usually narrow and if decorative can be worn low on the hips. Again, they are left long and worn tied through at the front.



Like men, a large -probably even larger -number of items can be hung from the waist e.g. purses, shears, keys, sewing kits etc. (in this case the belt must be tighter to support them). Such small items remain on the kirtle belt even when a gown is worn. The inconvenience is overcome by hanging items low and by hitching up the gown or sometimes by leaving sections of mid front seams unstitched to allow access by poking your hands through.



PARTLETS

Requirement:

Of linen (or calico) in natural finish or bleached white.

Guidance:

Partlets are anything from:

- a properly shaped deep collar style overbodice coming to about breast level with front opening and underarm ties, to
- a plain rough triangle of cloth tucked into the neckline between kirtle and shift.

The first will help keep the front of your kirtle clean; both will prevent sunburn around the neck of a low-cut shift/kirtle.

Both types probably need to be secured to the kirtle bodice with pins to keep them in place.

APRONS

Requirement:

Of linen (or calico) natural/ bleached white or possibly dyed (e.g. Red, blue or brown)

Guidance:

Aprons were worn both indoors and outside when working e.g. cleaning, cooking, spinning or even weeding and shopping.

Aprons were often a sign of respectability – sometimes they were specifically denied to prostitute women while out of doors.

A simple apron for dirty work could be an oblong of cloth with its corners tied behind your back or even behind your neck and then belted.

Smarter aprons on a proper waistband might be either plain or slightly gathered. Really nice ones might be smocked onto the band – These could even be coloured; dark reds, blues, sludgy greens or brown are illustrated. Very narrow

LIVERY

Women do appear in illustrations wearing tabards and surcoats in livery colours, especially when serving in some recognised capacity such as musicians, banner bearers or water carriers. This is also an instant way to make yourself look a bit more military even if you don't actually intend to be especially belligerent.

CHILDREN

The presence of children in correct dress really enhances the effectiveness of the Society, making us look much more like a varied group of real medieval people. Children do have the annoying habit of growing but there are ways of making kit last and minimising cost. There is also a ready and eager market in outgrown - but not outworn -children's kit.

The smallest babies and children of either sex can be dressed in cool linen in simple mid-calf shifts with long sleeves, soft booties, a plain coif and a broad brimmed hat – all of which will help with protection from the sun.

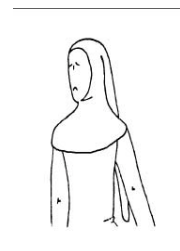
An approximation of a medieval shoe can be made for slightly bigger children by lacing a shaped medieval style upper over a modern shoe almost completely concealing it.

Instead of shoes, pattens could be worn. While these can be hinged or rigid, for children they should probably also have a buckled ankle strap for safety rather than just slip on. Obviously, they should not be too thick/high.

Larger children are dressed pretty much as adults but with a few variations:

BOYS

Even late in our period young boys are quite likely to wear split hose and a longish tunic cut fairly loose. This type of outfit will obviously last a growing youth for far longer than a fitted joined hose/pourpoint/doublet one will. On very hot days boys could wear braies and loose shirt for coolness – rather like their fathers at work. Shirts should not be belted as this looks decidedly Hollywood.



Belts are worn usually with pouch and purse even for quite young boys.

Shoes and boots are just smaller versions of adults' or pattens can be worn.

Headgear should be worn and is most usually a coif or when cold a hood with or without a liripipe. Many of the less flamboyant hats worn by men are also suitable.

From their teens boys dress as men, younger if middling to posh.

GIRLS

The difference between girls' and women's' dress is very slight especially if you're middle class where even small girls can have full length skirts -poorer girls would have shorter skirts like their mothers.

Baggy shifts don't present such a problem but a suddenly outgrown kirtle at the beginning of the season is alarming!

There are several contemporary illustrations of girls who seem to have their kirtles let out and down to allow for growth:

- 1) The kirtle can lace at the sides (instead or as well as back or front) and simply be let out by lacing progressively more loosely.
- 2) Front lacing can similarly be allowed to spread open. A (probably oblong) piece of fabric – sometimes in contrast colour to the kirtle – is placed behind the spread lacing as a sort of stomacher. This could be simply tacked to the inside of the kirtle on one side and tucked into the other and possibly fixed by an appropriate badge. (Allow plenty of overlap at base and both sides)
- 3) Although length is not crucial, especially for poorer girls, some girl's kirtles do seem to have been let down. A plain broad band (NO frills or flounces!) is added to the hem, perhaps up to 6" deep. This band needs to be cut to the same curve as the kirtle hem and may be either the same or a contrast colour.
- 4) It is not possible to tell whether contrast colour lower sleeves or any fully take-out sleeves are just the fashion of the time or perhaps replacements for those that became too short or too tight.

An instant revamp for last season's outgrown kirtle could use all these ideas – Open lacing over a contrast piece, plus matching hem band addition and new/lower sleeves could be done both quickly and cheaply and look quite special.

Head coverings tend to be simple tied cloths, 'rabbit' hats or coifs. Young girls of marriageable age (not merely below it) may wear their long hair loose and uncovered but still usually have some sort of suggestion of a headdress (e.g. a frontlet or band) at the front. This really means girls in their teens – don't kid yourself!

In practice hair was probably covered anyway for non-posh girls in order to keep it clean while working or out of doors.

FASTENINGS

As well as appropriate medieval style buttons or hand made hooks and eyes that have already been mentioned, many closures were made by points (ties). Here are some tips for eyelet spacing and making points.

EYELET HOLES

Pairs of eyelet holes work best with no more than 1.5" between each hole and no more than 3" between each pair.

The easiest way to make them is probably by poking a hole with a spike or sharpened metal knitting needle. Work around the hole in simple blanket stitch

with either embroidery silk or linen buttonhole thread. Poke your spike through to open the hole up a bit and then go round in blanket stitch again a second time before once more opening up with the spike finally.

Although you can use metal eyelets they may be more hassle than helpful – they seem to place more strain on the surrounding fabric and actually take longer to cover in blanket stitch than working a plain hole.

Matching the holes on hose/ doublet etc:

(If you do this your top and bottom halves will go together well)

- 1) Make a pair of eyelets to straddle the centre back line.
- 2) Make a pair of eyelets to straddle the side line/hip seams.
- 3) Mark the middle of the space between the two sets you have made and then do a set straddling that mark on each side at the back.
- 4) Make a pair of eyelets at the front beginning 5/8"/1.5cm in from the front edge.
- 5) Mark the centre of the remaining gaps as before and work your eyelets straddling those for the mid front sets.

You should now have 9 matching pairs.

CORDS FOR POINTS, TIES, ETC.

You need about half a metre/ yard for each point (tie) on doublet/hose, etc. A kirtle tie would be at least 1.5m/yd.

While some modern cords are reasonably unobtrusive it can be difficult to find exactly the right thing. Fine leather thong is OK but tends to untie itself.....

It's quite easy to make your own cords to co-ordinate with your kit and thus also use the type most suitable for each purpose:

Lucet/lucette cords made on a wooden "fork" form a strong square section cord that stays tied and is stretchy -even when made in silk. When made in wool you achieve the nearest thing to medieval elastic available! The 'give' in Lucet made points, especially on hose, is a valuable aid in movement and helps prevent hose from ripping. Lucets are widely available at re-enactment events for under a fiver, lots of people will be able to pass on this simple technique.

You need to start with yarn four times the length of the intended piece of cord.

Braids and twists are more suitable where a more rigid cord is required. (A stretchy tie in a kirtle front just doesn't work!) Fingerloop braids and simple twists are easy and again fellow members will be able to show you.

The ends of cords need to be finished with metal chapes/tags, called aiglets, which make them easier to thread through eyelet holes and also prevent unravelling or fraying.

In an emergency, or perhaps if poor and plain, you could dip the ends of your cords in wax.

REFERENCE SOURCES

As before the key is to go to the original -look at paintings, woodcuts and illuminations; engravings and memorial brasses; carvings on furniture, tombs or buildings and of course three dimensional objects in museum collections.

'Interpretative' drawings of both dress and armour/weaponry in older books may owe a great deal more to fantasy than historic finds

– The give-away is that they usually don't provide any specific references.

Surprisingly, many museums will allow you to take detailed flash photographs - though with some restrictions – both the British Museum and Victoria & Albert Museum will even sell you single use cameras for the purpose from their souvenir shops. However, do check first. It's always worth asking anyway unless photography is very sternly forbidden, as many curators are only too pleased to meet seriously interested visitors.

So, here is a short selection of books that other members have found useful and enjoyable followed by some venues for inspirational visits:

BOOKLIST

Military:

- i. 'The Medieval Soldier: 15th century campaign life recreated in colour photographs' by Gerry Embleton & John Howe. Pub. Windrow & Greene, 1994. ISBN 1 85915 036 5 Hardback £35:00 A superb pictorial guide, primarily military although domestic settings, too, and quite good on women's stuff as long as you look hard. Still available from re-enactment booksellers and while it seems expensive if you buy only one book make it this one.
- ii. 'The Osprey Men-at-Arms Series' (e.g. Wars of the Roses, Longbow, Medieval European Armies, etc) Pub. Osprey 1970s onward. Paperbacks £5:00 -£15:00. Excellent photographs of originals with detailed explanatory text accompanied by colour plates, many by Gerry Embleton.

Dress & Social:

- iii. 'Medieval Life: eyewitness guide no.65' by Andrew Langley. Pub. Dorling Kindersley, 1996. ISBN 0 7513 6064 Hardback £9:95 Surprisingly wide-ranging look at late medieval Europe mostly illustrations (originals and accurate replicas) with good text captions.
- iv. 'Tres Riches Heures du Duc de Berry' by Musee Conde. Pub. Thames & Hudson, 1993. ISBN 0 500 27551 3 Paperback £16:99 Full colour facsimile edition of magnificent early 15th century book of hours (though completed in 1485) Good source for peasant/labourers' dress through the seasons.
- v. 'The History of Dress Series: late Gothic Europe, 1400-1500' by Margaret Scott. Pub. Mills & Boon, 1980. ISBN 0 263 06429 8 Hardback. Out of print but standard library book. Scholarly work fully referenced and copiously illustrated mostly in black and white but some colour. Some of the pictures are unusual rather than just those frequently repeated.
- vi. 'A Visual History of Costume: the 14th & 15th centuries' by Margaret Scott. Pub. Batsford, 1986. ISBN 0 7134 4857 1 Hardback. Out of print but standard library book. Well referenced pictorial record of tombs, brasses, paintings, etc with more English examples than usual. Some other trustworthy authors on dress to look out for include Janet Arnold, Anne

- Buck, Wendy Childs, Phillis & C Willet Cunnington, Francoise Pipponier, and Ann Sutton. Historical Background:
- vii. 'The Chronicles of the Wars of the Roses: the turbulent years of the last Plantagenets' ed. Elizabeth Hallam. Pub. Bramley, 1997. ISBN 1 85833 588 4 Hardback £29:99 (but widely seen discounted at £9:99) A yearly 'diary' account beginning in 1377 to also cover the latter part of the Hundred Years War. Accompanied by short specialist articles with hundreds of illustrations – easy dip in/ put down read.
 - viii. 'The Wars of the Roses' Pitkin Guide. Pub, 1996 ISBN 0 85372 779 1 Paperback £2:95 This really brilliant booklet is only twenty pages long, with about half that in pictures, yet manages to cover the main points smartly. Available from shops at many of the historic sites we visit.
 - ix. 'The Sunne in Splendour' by Sharon Penman. Pub Penguin, 1984 ISBN 0 14 006764 7 Paperback £8:95 A long novel of unashamed Yorkist sympathy (which may comfort or offend...) Well written, pretty accurate and does seem to get the history to stay in the mind.

Many recent out of print books can be borrowed (often for up to three months) via your local Public Library usually for the cost of a couple of first class stamps. They might even obtain other 20th century stuff for you from the British Library for around a fiver.

There is also the specialist 'Ancient & Medieval History Book Club' ('Phone 01793 548131) that offers current mainstream books and also more obscure research works from scholarly publishers, sometimes at considerable discount.

INTERESTING OUTINGS

It would take too much space to list full details for each venue opening hours, prices and access are in any case liable to change so 'phone numbers only are included.

- i. Museum of London, Barbican. Tel.: 0207 600 3699 Themed display of excavated finds from London. The Museum also publishes (expensive!) expert manuals covering dress, footwear, accessories, badges, etc.
- ii. Victoria & Albert Museum, Sth. Kensington, SW7 Tel.: 0207 938 8441 Everything -medieval embroideries, jeweled reliquaries, stained glass, sculptures, tombs. Strongroom includes selection of medieval jewelry. Also a textile archive room open to general visitors and rooms of casts taken from objects kept elsewhere. Interesting study courses.
- iii. British Museum, Bloomsbury, WC1 Tel.: 0207 636 1555 Medieval rooms contain enamels; jewelry; games; carved ivory, wood and leather; pottery; tiles; even clocks. Comprehensive bookshop.
- iv. British Library, Euston. NW1 Tel.: 0207 412 7000 (request 'Visitor Services') Public galleries have permanent and temporary interactive displays. Most of the former British Museum manuscripts are now here.
- v. National Gallery Sainsbury Wing, Trafalgar Square, WC2 Tel.: 0207 747 2885. This new wing is sixteen rooms of paintings from before 1510 including famous early Flemish and Italian works. Excellent bookshop which also has videos and CD ROMs. Interesting study courses.

- vi. Wallace Collection, Manchester Square, WC Tel.: 0207 935 0687. Large mixed collection including medieval weaponry and armour.
- vii. Royal Armoury, Leeds Tel.: 0990 106 666. National collection which now includes most of the exhibits previously at the Tower of London.
- viii. Weald & Downland Open Air Museum nr Chichester. Tel.: 01243 811348 Reconstructed rescued buildings in parkland setting. Centrepiece is 'Bayleaf' a late medieval yeoman's farmstead with herb and veg gardens and an interior which has furniture, hangings, stores, etc.
- ix. Treasurers House, York. Tel.: 01904 624247 As well as the house itself recreated interiors with furniture, hangings, utensils.
- x. Salisbury Museum. Tel.: 01722 332151 General museum but with good selection of medieval badges, keys, etc. especially the 'Drainage Collection' Has own comprehensive catalogues of medieval finds.
- xi. Warwick Castle Kingmaker Exhibition. Tel.: 01926 406600 Accurate figures and room settings depicting the Earl and his household in 1471 packing and making ready to go to fight at Barnet.
- xii. Mary Rose Exhibition, Portsmouth Dockyard. Tel.: 01705 812931 Although around fifty years later than our period in style, many items of interest. Large collection of longbows, arrows, and tools. Poignant displays of personal possessions.